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Patients' Rights, Not ObamaCare, Will Bring About True Health Reform

By: Senator Wayne Kuipers

More than one million Michiganders are without health insurance. Michigan suffers from the worst economic performance of any state in the country because of our anti-growth, tax-and-spend policies.

And yet, the President and Congressional leaders are pushing health "reform" that would raise health care costs, harm patients, and cripple taxpayers and the economy.

What Washington doesn't realize is that ObamaCare has already been tried in several states-with devastating consequences.

In 2006, Massachusetts implemented comprehensive health reform that included a mandate for individuals and businesses to purchase health insurance, a health insurance exchange, and expansion of the Medicaid program.

Sound familiar?

Just three years later, more than one-third of Massachusetts' uninsured still don't have coverage. Health insurance premiums there are rising faster than the national average. Patients are reporting long waits just to see a doctor. New tax hikes are being considered for individuals, businesses, and medical providers. State spending on health care has risen by nearly half since implementing the bill, which has also caused nearly a third of Massachusetts' budget deficit.

In 2003, Maine implemented DirigoChoice, a public plan charged with covering all of its uninsured by 2009.

Sound familiar?

Today, Maine has about 21,000 more uninsured citizens since before DirigoChoice was enacted. DirigoChoice premiums have risen by 74 percent in four years, and benefits have been slashed. Plus, Maine's taxpayers have endured tax increases and more than \$155 million in state spending for its public plan.

Lessons learned from Massachusetts and Maine tell us that ObamaCare will lead to high health costs, a decline in patient care, state budget deficits, and crippling tax hikes.

Michigan can be a national leader in reforming health care -- the right way. I've introduced Senate Joint Resolution K (SJR K), which amends Michigan's Constitution to protect your right to make your own, individualized, health care choices.

My constitutional amendment would ensure your right to pay directly for medical care. This may sound like common sense -- and it is -- but single-payer systems like Canada make it illegal for patients to go outside of the government's health plan and pay for medical care.

When the government controls health care spending, treatment decisions are made based on what's best for the government. My joint resolution will ensure that you, not a government bureaucrat, decide which doctor to see and what medical treatments to undergo.

SJR K will also prevent you from being penalized for failing to purchase government-defined insurance.

We all agree that it is important for people to have health insurance coverage; however, the Massachusetts model is a prime example of the ineffective, bureaucratic, and costly ramifications that ensue when the government dictates the purchase of health insurance.

Of course, SJR K is just a small part of the overall health reform picture. Federal and state lawmakers should ensure that individuals can control their own health care dollars; that patients can choose from a variety of health plans that suit their needs; and that Medicare, Medicaid, and other public programs are reformed to bring about better patient care and lower costs to taxpayers.

In the meantime, though, we must protect Michigan's patients from assaults on their rights. My joint resolution will guarantee that the foundation of any health reform in Michigan will be the protection of patients' rights.

The time for constitutional protection is now.